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retrospect was much clearer twenty-five years ago, than it could be today were he with us. The writer was a journalist who in 1851 was one of the founders of the "Calaveras Chronicle." Later, in 1856, he was one of the company that established the San Francisco "Daily Morning Call," which journal still survives. His journalistic experiences elsewhere were wide and his training is evidenced in his book, as in it there is considerable "live news."

The Vigilance Committee, and the Broderick-Terry duel are the two great chapters of the fifties most favored by writers. Col. Ayers was in San Francisco during both of these events, but he has said but little about them, and doubtless such was his intention.

Of lesser known episodes of interest his accounts are more extended. He gives a graphic description of the Chilean aggression in Calaveras in 1849. This was the attempt of the Chileans to monopolize mining, having introduced peons for that purpose. Sanguinary difficulties ensued, and this narrative of Col. Ayers seems to be all that has appeared in print. An account of the establishment of the "Morning Call," is equally interesting.

In 1872, Col. Ayers settled in Los Angeles, where the last quarter-century of his life was passed. He was a well-known, influential, and highly respected character, and he gives us much that is new of the men, life, and events of the south. His death occurred in 1897. There are a few minor errors in the work, but for those who care for the early days of California, this volume cannot fail to hold real and unaffected interest.

Robert Ernest Cowan.



La société californienne de 1850, d'après Bret Harte. Paris, 1921. By Cécile Réau. Published by Ollier-Henry: for sale in San Francisco at The French Book Store.

History is not alone a record of events. The study of man in his social reactions is of the very fabric of history. From this wider point of view it can safely be said that one of the most interesting contributions to the history of early California

has recently been made by a French author, Mlle. Cécile Réau, in her *La société californienne de 1850, d'après Bret Harte*. It is fitting that students here should be aware that the theme and the treatment are of such importance that the University of Paris accepted the book in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of doctor.

The author is a detached professor of the French Ministry of Public Instruction, and she came to California four years ago to fill appointments as teacher at the University of California and Mills College. Attracted by the romance and historical importance of the pioneer period, she looked for books which would best present the life of those stirring times. She found chronological narratives, guides to the mines, personal reminiscences, fragments of local history, but no definite study of the life of the mining regions in the decade of the fifties. So she read her Bret Harte anew, not for the emotional enjoyment of his pathos and humor, but for the ever recurring, sharp and vital pictures of the miners' habits of life and thought.

This book is the outgrowth of her study, and in it Dr. Réau reassembles many scattered allusions, according to their logical connection, and presents them in such chapters as "The Emigration to California; Miners' Camps; San Francisco; Heroes of Bret Harte; Wives and Daughters of the Pioneers; The Children of California; Foreigners, Spanish, Mexican, Indians, Chinese." She has scrutinized her author as the modern critic scrutinizes the classic epics, and reconstructs the life of a period from the pages of tale and poem. It was a daring test, for the final result braved comparison with other contemporary records of unquestioned reliability. Josiah Royce had reproached Harte for his "perverse romanticism"—if that reproach were justified, a composite picture constructed from Harte's many sketches would betray fundamental crudity and distortion.

But the composite picture constructed by Dr. Réau is not distorted. It is, of course, sharply contrasted in its light and shade, it has elements of caricature, elements of melodrama—it is the vision of a poet who saw men and women through his own medium of spiritual discernment. We may have doubted his historical accuracy when we acknowledged ourselves under the spell of his magic. In Dr. Réau's book that spell is broken, not by hostile incantations, but by well ordered methods of critical analysis. Yet Bret Harte's men and women still live,

kin to the men and women of less inspired writers, the children of a unique and heroic era. One may well hope that in due time this delightful and sympathetic study of California society will be made available to the many readers who cannot profit by the edition in French.

Mary F. Williams.